

# FRIENDS of LONG LANE PASTURE NEWSLETTER

No. 13 August 2009

On 19<sup>th</sup> June Long Lane Pasture **re-opened to the public** after many years of closure and neglect. It was a very special day for everyone who has been involved in the Long Lane Pasture campaign. A big thank-you is due to all our Friends and supporters. You, with your belief and determination, made this possible.



*Cllr Brian Coleman, Mayor of Barnet, cuts the ribbon to mark the Pasture opening. 85 guests celebrated the event, which was sponsored by the BBC Breathing Places scheme.*

*On the day, Ann Brown, Chairman of the Long Lane Pasture Trust, presented the Mayor with 25 peppercorns as rent for the Trust's 25 year lease on the land – one peppercorn for each year until 2034.*

**The Pasture is now open every Saturday and Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.**

Eleven long years ago 1,213 local people signed a Petition: “We, the undersigned, object to proposals to build flats on Long Lane Pasture and ask the London Borough of Barnet to reject the application from Fairview Homes. We want the site restored as a Public Open Space for the benefit of the people of Finchley.” Well, miraculously, we’ve done it: a 25-year lease to run the site for community benefit is now in the hands of the Long Lane Pasture Trust.

There have been many pitfalls and obstructions: physical, political, legal, and bureaucratic. Dogged persistence produced a licence in 2004, which enabled us to start clearing up and managing the land: bramble clearance; removing years of dumped rubbish; brambles again; heavy mowing. It seemed endless. Julie Toll, celebrated wildlife landscape designer, produced an exciting scheme for us, and we settled to the rather less exciting task of writing a management plan, risk assessment, and applications for funds. All the time we are encouraged by some wonderful wildlife discoveries: our fox family is delightful, dragonflies on the new pond plentiful, and flowers now bloom nearly all year round. Many of us have taken real pleasure in seeing the Pasture improve from year to year.

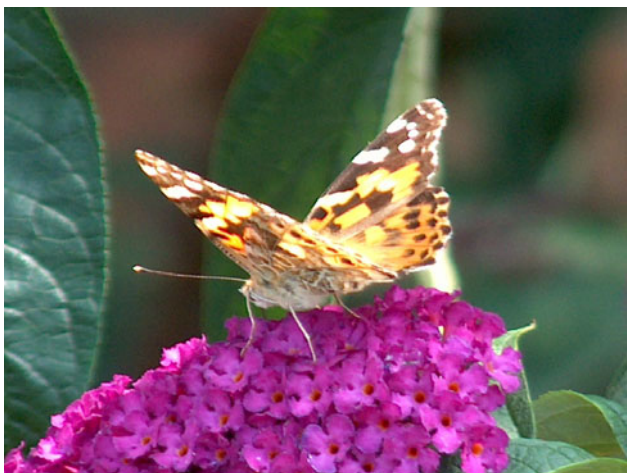
We invite all our Friends to visit the Pasture before summer passes – and tell your friends too. It is your appreciation and support that will safeguard the Pasture in the long term. But don't for a moment think the work is finished. Our regular work parties are held every Saturday morning (10.00 to 12.00) and more volunteers would be very welcome. There is plenty still to do, whatever your energy or ability. Just come along if you would like to help.

### *Special Events*

19<sup>th</sup> September, a.m. only ..... **Moths, after National Moth Night**  
28<sup>th</sup> November, a.m. only ..... **Tree Planting Day, as part of National Tree Week**  
**And there are still some blackberries left!**

On 25<sup>th</sup> July we held a special **Butterfly Day** and our butterflies turned out in style! Altogether eleven species of butterflies were recorded, one a new record for the Pasture.

The *White Letter Hairstreak*, never before seen on the Pasture, is of national concern because its numbers have been in decline recently. Its caterpillar feeds on elm, which has died off dramatically because of Dutch Elm disease. Where is the nearest elm? There are none on the Pasture so if you know of one nearby, please let us know. We have decided to plant a Princeton Elm, which is resistant to the disease, on Tree Planting Day in an attempt to encourage a colony to settle here.



Among the other butterflies we spotted on the day were Small Copper, Common Blue, Green Veined White and Essex Skipper, all unusual visitors. There were lots of Gatekeepers, Large Whites and, as everywhere this year, Painted Ladies. They arrived from Africa in huge numbers earlier in the year and have since bred a further generation – often on thistles (of which we have quite a few!) The developing Butterfly Border had plenty of flowers to encourage insects to stop awhile for nectar where visitors could admire them.

*Painted Lady in the Butterfly Border.*

A group of cinnabar moth caterpillars attracted a lot of attention, as did a vapourer moth caterpillar which crawled into our reception tent. The overnight moth trap produced three new records for us: Dark Arches, Clay, and Dot Moth.

On a different note, someone brought in a box containing a **duck family** (mother and six ducklings) found wandering in Long Lane. They settled in on our pond for a while, but have since moved on.

We have had visits from two **local schools**, something we are keen to encourage. A class of 29 five year olds from *Manorside School* were fascinated when Wayne Armsby showed them a bank vole. The toad was not so popular. A few weeks later, a sixth form biology class from *Bishop Douglass School* came along as part of their A level studies.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August we welcome our first **coach party** – 40 members of the *Octavia Hill Society*. Octavia Hill was founder of the National Trust and a doughty champion of green spaces for the poor and for city dwellers. “We all need space,” she wrote, “unless we have it we cannot reach that sense of quiet in which whispers of better things come to us gently. Our lives in London are over-crowded, over-excited, over-strained.” In her childhood Octavia Hill lived some 500 yards away from the Pasture. We like to think she visited our land and loved it as much as we do.

There is **more work ahead**. Over the next two months we will again be undertaking major works. We are preparing the ground for the footpath fencing to be completed, with a second gate and a viewing platform. The banks of the pond will be strengthened with a special mesh, and nearly all the rough grassland will receive its annual mow to keep down the brambles and other woody growth. Hint: we always need help with the haymaking after this cut!

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